Views of Breastfeeding in Public among Informally-Working Mothers of Infants under 6 Months in Moshi Urban District, Kilimanjaro Region, Tanzania: A Qualitative Study

Background: Optimal infant feeding practices include exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months, which necessitates breastfeeding infants regularly throughout the day. It is a common practice for women working in the informal sector to bring their infants to work with them, which typically requires breastfeeding in public settings. Women’s views and feelings towards breastfeeding in public can be a barrier to achieving optimal breastfeeding recommendations.

Objective: To understand the views surrounding breastfeeding in public among mothers working in the informal sector in Moshi Urban District, Kilimanjaro Region, Tanzania.

Methods: In-depth interviews were conducted among 20 informally-working mothers of infants &lt;6 months of age.

Results: Many women reported negative views towards breastfeeding in public, and evil eye, that is, of having someone look at the infant when breastfeeding and cause some sort of affliction, was the most cited concern. Participants described multiple strategies for addressing evil eye. However, not all women reported believing in evil eye or using these strategies, and a few participants appeared to have no major issues with breastfeeding in public. Participants reported multiple strategies for breastfeeding in public, such as moving aside and using coverings.

Conclusion: It is important to counsel mothers on how to breastfeed when outside the home and promote awareness and acceptability of breastfeeding in public to support mothers. Healthcare providers should understand evil eye beliefs and the role they play in infant feeding. Future research should evaluate community views and assess the relationship between mothers' infant feeding practices and their views towards breastfeeding in public.